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SCUTES RESERVED FOR LIVING TAGS

Living-tags on carapace scutes are being used to distinguish year-classes of head-started Kemp's ridley sea turtles, *Lepidochelys kempi* (Fontaine and Caillouet 1985). In this report, we provide information on which scutes have been used to place living-tags in past years and also outline our plans for placing living-tags on particular scutes of future year-classes of Kemp's ridleys.

Available records indicate that turtles released from year-classes 1978 and 1979 were not living-tagged. For year-classes 1980-1995, the scutes used or proposed for Kemp's ridleys living-taggs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scutes used or proposed for head started and living-tagged Kemp's ridleys.

1980	LC2, LC3, RC2, RC3, RC4, N2, N3, LH, LP, LA (some individuals were tagged between scutes RC2 & RC3, RC3 & RC4, LP & RP or LH & RH
1981	None living tagged
1982	LC3
1983	LC4
1984	LC5
1985	RC5
1986	N4
1987	N1
1988	RC1
1989	LC1
1990	RC4
1991	N2
1992	N3
1993	RC2
1994	LC2
1995	RC3

(RC = right costal; LC = left costal; N = neural; LH = left humeral; LP = left pectoral; LA = left abdominal; RP = right pectoral; RH = right humeral)

The scutes proposed for year-classes 1985-1995 were selected to minimize the probability of overlap between year-classes in use of the same scute. For example, under this scheme the reuse of a given scute would not occur until 1990 when right costal scute 4 (RC 4) would be used on the 1990 year-class (Table 1). Only one turtle of the 1980 year-class was living-tagged on RC 4. For the 1991

year-class, neural scute 2 (N 2) is proposed, as only 4 turtles on the 1980 year-class were tagged on that scute. [Neural scute 5 is avoided because it occasionally is split into a sixth neural. Reuse of humeral, pectoral and abdominal scutes also is not proposed.] Coordination among sea turtle investigators proposing use of living-tags will remain with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Bowman, 1983).

We request that anyone encountering what they believe to be living-tagged Kemp's ridleys contact us at the given address below or by telephoning any of the following numbers: (409) 766-3500; (409) 766-3517; (409) 766-3523; (409) 766-3507; (409) 766-3525. We would appreciate your noting the particualr scutes on which living-tags are located, as well as details concerning the size, location, date and method of recapture, sighting or stranding of the turtle.

Bowman, D. 1983. Tag locations reserved. MTN 25:12-13.

Fontaine, C. T. and C. W. Caillouet, Jr. 1985. The Kemp's ridley sea turtle head start project: an annual report for fiscal year 1984. NOAA Tech. Mem. NMFS-SEFC-152.

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ON THE DOLLAR VALUE OF THE OAXACAN RIDLEY FISHERY

It is always of interest to have some idea of the current market value of the wildlife resources we deal with. Mexico's legalized harvest program for adult olive ridleys (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) continues and is centered along the Pacific coast of the State of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. The operation has been in effect for over 10 years; despite dire warnings of population collapse it has not yet happened. The season just ended recorded five major emergences (*arribadas*) in which thousands of ridleys nested at Playa Escobilla. The first *arribada* was in late July and the last in early November.

The official government quota for the 1985 harvest was about 28,000 ridleys and apparently this quota was reached. On 20 November, while at Escobilla, I talked with the Fisheries Inspector, State of Oaxaca, regarding economic aspects of the harvest program. The following information came from this source.

Fishermen landing live ridleys at Puerto Angel received 4,000 pesos/turtle or approximately US $8.42 (475 pesos = 1 US dollar). For 28,000 turtles, this means that the entire harvest was worth approximately US $236,000 to the fishermen. The processing plant renders each animal into meat, leather, and bone meal. The value of all these products is about 12,000 pesos (US $25.26) per turtle to the wholesaler, representing a total of about US $707,000 for the 1985 legal quota. This is a combined value of US $943,000 up through the fisherman and the processor.

The only retail values I can presently provide are for cowboy boots in Mexico City and Matamoras where they are offered for sale for about US $140. Women's turtle leather shoes retail in Mexico City for about US $40.

Taking or selling of turtle eggs is illegal throughout Mexico; however, poaching is a major problem and the eggs are sold on the black market. In Oaxaca, poachers sell eggs at 30 pesos each (US 6¢) to their buyers. The buyers, in turn, sell the eggs at about 60 pesos each (US 13¢). Assuming an average clutch size of 105 eggs, this amounts to a value of about 6,300 pesos per clutch (US $13.26).

Overall, the ridley trade in Oaxaca grosses a minimum of one million dollars (US) annually. Retail value data is presently not at hand nor is the very important information on direct and indirect